policy is to promote conventional PCOs which are manned. These are being allotted to educated unemployed persons.

(d) Does not arise in view of part (c) above.

Foreign Financial Support to Militants in Punjab

29. SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the extremists and militant groups in Punjab continnue to nurture their links with foreign sources for financial support;

(b) if so, the Government's information or estimate about the extent of foreign funds that has flown into the hands of the militants in Punjab and the strength of the extremist forces and their hide-outs in that State; and

(c) the Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) Yes, Sir/ Madam.

(b) The interrogation of Sikh terrorists arrested during 1996 have revealed that the foreign based militants are remitting funds to the militants/sympathisers/harbourers based in India. As per reports, there are 24 hardcore terrorists and 257 non-hardcore terrorists who are still active.

(c) The Government is alert on the activities of the extremists. 83 militants/sympathisers/ harbourers were apprehended by the Security Forces during this year upto October, 96. The police and enforcement authorities are also alert on detecting Hawala transactions in Pubjab. A sum of Rs. 25.34 lakhs relating to illegal Hawala transaction has been recovered in Punjab.

Opening of new Passport Offices in Maharashtra

30. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to open new passport offices and collection centres in the State of Maharashtra to ensure speedy issuance of passports to the citizens and also to clear the backlog of pending applications in the State;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) which passport office in the State has largest number of pending applications as on 31st October, 1996, with details; and

(d) the steps being taken to clear the backlog of passport applications in the State?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL): (a) and (b) It has been decided to open 2 new Passport Offices in the State of Maharashtra at Thane and Pune. This decision has been taken to facilitate expeditious and smooth issue of Passports to the applicants.

(c) and (d) The largest number of pending applications is in Mumbai. As on 01.11.1996, the number of applications pending for over a month was 3925. The pending applications are being cleared through employment of casual labour and by the existing officials working for longer hours.

Multi-crore Scam in NDMC

31. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI O.P. KOHLI:
SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRI SUSHILKUMAR SAMBHAJIRAO SHINDE:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a multi-crore scam involving the tempering of electricity and water bills and misappropriation of payments from consumers amounting to several crores has been detected in New Delhi Municipal Council; and

(b) if so, the details of the findings of inquiries into the scam indicating the total amount found to have been involved and its modus operandi?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) and (b) During the course of investigation conducted so far, it has come to light that NDMC had granted a contract for computerisation of electricity/ water bills to M/s. Software Consultants India Pvt. Ltd. in 1985. In 1992, this firm was also awarded the contract for collection of these bills from the consumers.

For this purpose 4 counters were opened at Parliament Annex, Kidwai Nagar, Palika Bhawan and Gole Market in 1992 and later on more centres were opened at Bengali Market, Kaka Nagar, Nirman Bhavan, Palika Kendra.

Since the billing and collection of electricity and water bills were assigned to the same agency, it used to collect full amount of the bills from the consumers, issue computerised receipts and simultaneously enter these receipts in the computers. After daily collections, some persons of the agency used to copy the entries of daily collection stored in the computer in a separate computer file and thereafter resort to random manipulations of the collection entries in this file by reducing the amount actually collected from different consumers. Thus, difference of the actual collection and the amount shown in the manipulated collection statement that was being submitted to the NDMC alongwith the cash collected on the next day was being misappropriated.

The Computer file containing actual collection was used for the purpose of issuing the next bills to the consumers so that no arrears would get reflected in the bills of the consumers. Only the bills of the private consumers were being manipulated.

Although the manipulated statements alongwith reduced cash were deposited with the NDMC cash section on the next day, the statement showing actual collection was used to be deposited at the end of the year with the Rent Section of the NDMC, and the two were never tallied by the concerned sections of the NDMC. This encouraged/enabled the agency to perpetuate the fraud over a long period.

Investigation has so far revealed that by way of the above mentioned modus operandi the owner of the agency had misappropriated a sum of Rs. 6 crores approximately from March 1996 to 27th September, 1996, when the fraud was detected. Starting with lesser amounts, the misappropriation in the later stages appears to be to the tune of approximately Rs. 30 lakhs per month. NDMC has been requested by the CBI to conduct a Special Audit for helping the CBI in ascertaining the full amount misappropriated by way of this fraud.

Control of Social Evils

32. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the provisions of Law that control the social evils like obscenity, rape of minor girls, sex-related violence, terrorist activities and such other vices in our country;

(b) the details of such crimes during the last 3 years;

(c) whether these provisions of Law have been able to effectively control the crime in these field;

(d) whether Government consider these provisions enough to deal with such type of crimes; and

(e) if not, the measures Government propose to bring forward in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR): (a) Punishments for various social evils like obscenity, rape of minor child, sex-related violence, terrorist activities etc. are provided in the Indian Penal Code.

(b) Details are placed at Statement (*See* below).

(c) to (e) The existing legal provisions appear to be quite strict but even so the Government would not be unresponsive to suggestions for improvement.